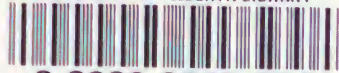


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MARY BROWN:  
FROM HARPERS FERRY  
TO CALIFORNIA

by Daniel Rosenberg

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TO INTERNATIONAL WOMEN'S YEAR 1975

"...unmentioned -- and not sufficiently caught in any book in print -- is the magnificence of Mary Brown. Some day someone will write a book devoted to her and will do justice to that life and above all to that scene where at her insistence and over the objections of John (who feared he would break) she visited him the day before he was hanged and talked with him for hours and comforted him and discussed their children."

Herbert Aptheker, "John Brown  
and the Writing of History,"  
Political Affairs, September, 1973

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## ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

This paper is a product of one and a half years of work, beginning with the author's initial research in the middle of his junior year at the State University of New York at Purchase and ending with the presentation of the completed paper as a senior thesis in history. In essence the present paper is that thesis, with some modifications.

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## INTRODUCTION

We have the record of kings and gentlemen ad nauseum and in stupid detail; but of the common run of human beings, and particularly of the half or wholly submerged working group, the world has saved all too little of authentic record and tried to forget or ignore even the little saved.<sup>1</sup>

W.E.B. Du Bois

The steadfastness of rank and file abolitionists was a key factor in the destruction of chattel slavery. Their participation effected what noted personalities alone could not guarantee. They were Black and white, male and female. They fought the "peculiar institution" with a variety of weapons, for this was a broad movement.

Mary Anne Day Brown (1816-1884) can be counted among their ranks. Selfless, dedicated, and effective, she and many like her sacrificed everything for their common purpose. But she is an especially neglected figure, despite the fact that she was married to John Brown, the "Old Man" of Osawatimie and Harper's Ferry and one of the premier liberation fighters. Mary Brown was his firmest ally, his right arm in the anti-slavery effort, indispensable to his activities.

Most of her husband's biographers devote several pages to Mary Brown, describing her marriage, her poverty, and her final meeting with John Brown. Some of them exaggerate and see Brown as "incapable of anything selfish or base." By the same token they show Mary Brown (in the few words they devote to her) as a virtual saint.<sup>2</sup> Stephen Oates, Oswald G. Villard, and Richard O. Boyer have written generally positive biographies of John Brown.<sup>3</sup> Like the more eulogistic biographers they recognize that the Browns were human, with human frailties and weaknesses, and yet at the same time, and more importantly, were stalwart and devoted to the anti-slavery cause and to the betterment of humanity in general. These writers present a relatively positive picture of Mary Brown.

There are also biographers who seek to prove John Brown's "insanity" or to demonstrate the "madness" of his course. Often concentrating on Brown's supposed psychological disorder (and barely mentioning the nature of the system he attacked), they cast Mary Brown as a moronic figure, and indifferent to tragedy and pain.



Psychological explanations are comforting to those of us who don't want our little worlds upset, because they emphasize the irrationality of the protester rather than the irrationality of that which produces protest. It seems much easier for us to believe that Abolitionists were vehement because they were upward striving than that they grasped in some small way the horror of slavery.<sup>5</sup>

These varying and often opposing opinions on Mary Brown point up the need for a more extended look at her life. This essay concerns the life of Mary Brown from 1859 to 1884, with an examination (in the interest of setting the record straight) of her character. I will deal with certain aspects of her life prior to 1859: her childhood, marriage, relationship with her husband, role as a mother, and her poverty. But 1859, the Harper's Ferry year, brought to a close the most tumultuous period of her life. Her endurance and ruggedness stand out, particularly during the journey to her imprisoned husband on the eve of his execution.

The evidence indicates that she was a modest, but determined person with a will of her own, the assertions of Robert Penn Warren notwithstanding, and that she remained faithful to her

Does it seem as if freedom were to gain or lose by this? I have had thirteen children, and only four are left; but if I am to see the ruin of my house, I cannot but hope that Providence may bring out of it some benefit to the poor slaves.<sup>11</sup>



## YEARS WITH JOHN BROWN

Mary Anne Day had been born in Granville, New York (near Whitehall, Washington County) on April 15, 1816.<sup>12</sup> Charles Day, her father, a blacksmith by trade, "had been fairly well-to-do but lost his means by endorsing notes, and so Mary grew up in narrow means and hard work with almost no schooling".<sup>13</sup> She received her only formal education in Granville. When Mary was ten, in 1826, her father moved the family to Meadville, in north-western Pennsylvania.

John Brown (b. 1800) was living in nearby Richmond, Pennsylvania, at this time with his first wife, (Dianthe Lusk Brown), and their three children. He operated a tannery and made his home a station on the Underground Railroad. On August 10, 1832 Dianthe Brown died, shortly after giving birth to her seventh child (who died three days later.)

Eventually Brown hired, as a housekeeper, Charles Day's oldest daughter who brought her sixteen year old sister Mary with her. John Brown and Mary Day soon became strongly attached to each other. They were married on July 11, 1833. Mary was seventeen; her husband was thirty-three. (John Brown, Jr., Brown's eldest son, was thirteen.)<sup>14</sup>

The Brown family moved from one place to another in accordance with his successes and failures. John Brown was away from the family much of the time, attending to his business interests, so Mary assumed a greater share of the child-rearing. She and her husband were to have thirteen children. There were also five surviving children of John and Dianthe: John Jr., Jason, Owen, Ruth, and Frederick, who was killed in Kansas in 1856.<sup>15</sup>

Although she had to be strong to bear the physical and mental pressures she encountered, Richard Dana, a visitor to the Browns' North Elba, N.Y. home, wrote that Mary Brown was "rather an invalid," and F.B. Sanborn, her close friend, described her as being "long out of health."<sup>20</sup> It appears from her own statements that she was indeed frequently ill. She received treatments for several months in 1849 at a "Water Cure" in Northampton, Massachusetts. Mary heard of the place through Frederick Douglass, the great Black abolitionist. The "Cure's" proprietor, David Ruggles, was another Black abolitionist. Lecturers visited the "Cure" and led discussions on topical questions. Mary attended several of these lectures, and described a visit by one of the leading women abolitionist speakers: "We have had Miss Lucy Stone here to lecture to us I went to hear for the first time that I

ever heard a Woman speak liked her very well."<sup>21</sup>

Poor much of her life, Mary Brown was continually forced to request money, supplies, food, or work animals of her husband, her relatives, and her friends. A neighbor described a visit (probably in the early 1850's) to the Brown home: "The John Browns were then living very poor, for although John Brown had taken the benefit of the bankrupt laws, he was saving money to pay his debts. Mary Brown told the Halls: 'We don't like to ask people to visit us, as we are living so poor.'"<sup>22</sup>

Brown sent money and supplies to her and the family, even while fighting in Kansas. Some of the funds he sent had been contributed by sympathizers.<sup>23</sup> Mary received substantial drafts for money on more than one occasion. In a letter from North Elba on March 20, 1856 she acknowledged the receipt of one such draft:

.....we are very much obliged for the money.....We have tried to use what means we had as economical as we know how to & tried to keep out of debt. What we have now received will pay up all of our debts & some over to get leather for shoes the girls and I have not had any since we came here and I have made all Ellen has had this winter out of cloth.<sup>24</sup>

John Brown respected and loved his wife. Their frequent periods of separation during his business career pained him greatly, so that he sometimes wondered about continuing his commercial pursuits. He greatly admired Mary's perseverance. Among a number of beautiful, sensitive letters to her, he wrote the following from Springfield, Massachusetts, on March 7, 1847.

My Dear Mary

It is once more Sabbath evening & nothing so much accords with my feelings as to spend a portion of it conversing with the partner of my own choice & the sharer of my poverty, trials, discredit, & sore afflictions, as well as of what of comfort & seeming prosperity has fallen to my lot, for quite a number of years....I do not forget the firm attachment of her who has remained my fast, faithful affectionate friend, when others said of me (now that he lieth he shall rise up no more). When I reflect on these things together with the very considerable difference in our ages, as well as all the follies & faults with which I am justly chargeable, I



really admire at your consistency & I really feel notwithstanding I sometimes chide you severely, that you are really my better half.<sup>25</sup>

Mary loved her husband equally well. A visitor to the Brown home recalled that Mary would keep a scissors handy so she could clip and save from her husband's letters those sentences praising her and expressing regard.<sup>26</sup> The love and support that husband and wife gave to each other seemed never to ebb, even during the roughest times.

John Brown always kept Mary Brown abreast of the activities in Kansas. In these matters he confided in her as if she were fighting beside him. She received up-to-date reports on all skirmishes, meetings, conventions and elections. Brown wrote her in March 1858: "I have moved about with utmost stillness but my proposed measures seem to be cordially approved by all earnest friends of Humanity.... I feel that the great harvest day of my life approaches and shall I not 'gird up my loins' that I may reap?"<sup>27</sup>

Mary was aware of her husband's intent to liberate the slaves and she supported him to the fullest extent. The entire family discussed his plan around the dinner table at North Elba. Sarah Brown recalled standing behind her father's chair during family discussions of Harper's Ferry, "watching him draw diagrams of log forts, explaining how the logs were to be made, and how trees were to be felled....and laid as obstacles to attacking parties." Sarah also observed that, despite the dangers, her mother made no protest, that "she never was a whining, clinging woman."<sup>28</sup>

Brown told F.B. Sanborn that Mary had been well prepared for his activities. "I always told her that when the time came to fight against slavery, that conflict would be the signal for our separation. She made up her mind to have me go long before this; and when I did go, she got ready bandages and medicine for the wounded."<sup>29</sup>

Mary told Theodore Tilton that her husband had been waiting twenty years for an opportunity to free the slaves: "....we had all been waiting, with him, the proper time when he should put his resolve into action; and when at last the enterprise of Harper's Ferry was planned, we all thought the time had now come,"<sup>30</sup>

After a last visit with his family at North Elba the "Old Man" left for Chambersburg, Pennsylvania where a cache of weapons was stored.<sup>31</sup> He soon felt that his wife would be a great asset at the farm where arrangements were being finalized. In early July 1859 he asked her to come to his hideaway in Maryland:

I would be most glad to have you and Anne come on with Oliver, & make me a visit of a few weeks while I am preparing to build. I find it will be indispensable to have some women of our own family with us for a short time. I don't see how we can get along without, & on that account have sent Oliver at a good deal of expense to come back with you; if you cannot come, I would be glad to have Martha and Anne come on.<sup>32</sup>

But Mary decided against going, perhaps because Ellen was only five. Anne and Martha (Oliver's wife) were more than willing to go and they did, arriving, with Oliver, at the farm in mid-July.

During the months before the raid, Mary was responsible for communicating important directives to those in North Elba who had not yet departed for the South. She was asked to stress to them the element of security when discussing their impending trip. Silence was the key, wrote her husband: "Persons who do not talk much are seldom questioned much."<sup>33</sup>

For six weeks Mary heard nothing from her husband. On the night of October 16 John Brown and eighteen of his twenty-one men (sixteen whites and five Blacks) attacked Harper's Ferry and captured the armory and arsenal. For thirty-six hours a battle raged as local volunteers, militias, and Federal troops responded to the invasion. Ten of Brown's men were killed, including Watson and Oliver Brown. Brown was captured, with four of his men.<sup>34</sup>

News of the Raid spread swiftly. Only the most radical abolitionists did not condemn it. Mary did not learn of the events at Harper's Ferry until several days after the Raid. She knew nothing of her husband's capture, of the deaths of Watson, Oliver, and the others. The mail came once a week to North Elba and newspaper deliveries were irregular.

One day a young man came to the Brown farm with a copy of the New York Times containing an account of the Harper's Ferry events. Annie, the fastest reader in the family, read the article. Years later she remembered: "There was very little weeping or wailing, or loud demonstration on the part of our broken household. We were most of us struck dumb with a grief too deep and too hard to find expression in words or even tears." Ruth Brown Thompson "could not weep, nor sleep, and felt as though death would be a relief," when she heard the news. "And to witness poor Mary's suffering was dreadful."<sup>35</sup>



The deaths of Watson and Oliver and the arrest and trial of her husband were terrible blows to Mary Brown. The failure of the Raid and its bloody outcome surprised her. She told Theodore Tilton:

Mr. Brown was sanguine of success; we all were equally confident; he had no idea, nor did any of the family, that the experiment would result in defeat; we all looked to it as fulfilling the hopes of many years.<sup>36</sup>

John Brown spent a week in jail before going to trial, during which time Mary heard nothing from him. The trial lasted one week. On October 31 the defense and prosecution gave their summations and then the jury went into seclusion, emerging forty-five minutes later with a guilty verdict. On November 2 Judge Richard Parker sentenced the "Old Man" to die on the gallows on December 2, 1859.<sup>37</sup>

The question of John Brown's sanity had come up during his trial. His Ohio relatives filed nineteen affidavits attesting to his insanity in order to save their kinsman. He repudiated this, as did his wife: "No he is not insane. His reason is clear. His last act was the result, as all his other acts have been, of his truest and strongest conscientious convictions."<sup>38</sup> She added that she would not testify to her husband's "insanity" even if it were to save his life.<sup>39</sup>

The letters Mary and others now began to receive from Brown in jail dismissed outright any notions of a prison break. Thomas Wentworth Higginson, one of the Secret Six (F.B. Sanborn, George L. Stearns, Theodore Parker, Samuel Howe, and Higginson, New England abolitionists particularly close to John Brown), visited Mary at North Elba on November 2. He persuaded her to go to Charlestown, Virginia to try to convince her husband to let his friends get him out.<sup>40</sup>

Mary and Higginson went via Boston where she could board a train for Philadelphia and Baltimore. The Baltimore American noted her arrival and the interest it stirred, for it was expected that her presence before her husband would 'have the effect of softening him down.'<sup>41</sup> John Brown, however, when notified that she was on the way, was dead set against her coming. Lawyer George Bennett telegraphed Higginson: "Mr Brown says for gods sake don't let Mrs. Brown come."<sup>42</sup>

Mary then returned to Philadelphia, going first to the home of William Still, the Black abolitionist, and then to Rebecca Spring's home in Perth Amboy, New Jersey. Here she received a letter from the young lawyer George M. Hoyt, who had just visited Brown. He wrote that her husband "fears your presence will undo the fine composure of his mind & so agitate him as to unman & unfit him for the last great sacrifice."<sup>43</sup> Brown also feared the trip would use up whatever money she had, and that she would be a "gazing stock" throughout the whole journey. And he was concerned about the "pains of a final separation." It appeared that Mary would not see her husband before he died.<sup>44</sup>

Mary wrote him from Philadelphia, on November 13, that she had not thought when she had bid him farewell in June that she would never see him again. But she felt that this was God's will. And she still did not lose sight of the purposes and results of Harper's Ferry:

I have often thought that I should rather that you were dead than fallen into the hands of your enemies; but I don't think so now. The good that is growing out of it is wonderful. If you had preached in the pulpit ten such lives as you have lived, you could not have done in that one speech to the Court. It is talked about and preached about everywhere and in all places.<sup>45</sup>

As the execution date neared, however, Brown gradually relaxed his opposition to a final meeting with his wife. He implored Mary to "consider the matter well" and to come only if she felt she could "endure the trials and the shock."<sup>46</sup>

There were goings-on behind the scenes, too. Abolitionists were concerned with Mary's economic situation. William Lloyd Garrison, J.M. McKim, and others prepared to collect funds for Mary and the family. McKim wrote Garrison: "Mrs. B. should be consulted before any appropriation is either made or promised,"<sup>47</sup> but he felt that she was too modest to admit she needed assistance.

Mary Brown soon returned to Philadelphia where Higginson and other abolitionists thought she would receive more aid from friends.

She wrote a long, emotional letter, on November 21, to Governor Henry Wise of Virginia, asking for the bodies of her husband and sons so she could give them proper burial. Governor Wise acceded to this request. He said he was sorry her husband



had to die and stated his sympathy with her "affliction." Nevertheless, his straightforward response eliminated in Mary any flickering hopes she may have had of a commutation of sentence.<sup>48</sup>

On November 26, John Brown formally agreed to a visit by his wife. He was now "entirely willing" that she see him before his execution.<sup>49</sup> Mary left immediately for Harper's Ferry, for the execution was set for December 2. Consistently maintaining to her military escort that John Brown's execution was both "cruel" and "unjust", that she "regarded him as a martyr in a righteous cause" and was "proud to be his wife",<sup>50</sup> Mary came to Charlestown about noon on December 1, twenty-three hours before Brown was to hang. The town was in an uproar, full of rumors of impending prison breaks and rescue attempts, including one involving Mary and John Brown, Jr. Thousands of troops were stationed there, many of them quartered in churches. Mary was greeted by a show of arms that was both threatening and "chivalrous", for the Southern gentlemen desired to extend to her "the courtesy due to a woman."<sup>51</sup> J.M. Ashley, a Brown sympathizer, wrote to McKim: "I do not think it right that the country should be assured that Mrs. Brown and her friends were treated with gallantry and courtesy. For certainly it was not so."<sup>52</sup> After a long wait she was allowed to go to the prison at three-thirty. Searched for weapons, incendiaries and poison, she was finally let in to see John Brown. The chains were removed from his legs for the occasion.

They met in the jailer's office. Husband and wife embraced. They discussed the future welfare of the family and agreed that their daughters should become educated. They also discussed the final will and codicil: Mary was to have all his personal and landed property; this was to be equally distributed among the children after her death. Mary told him that she had permission to take his body, as well as the bodies of Oliver and Watson, back to North Elba. Brown suggested that she burn the bodies and put the bones in a box for burial. Mary replied that she didn't think she could do this and Brown told her not to worry about it, that he thought this would save expenses.

The Browns spoke for several hours and were allowed to eat supper together. At eight o'clock General Taliaferro told Mary she would have to leave. Brown momentarily lost his temper; he wanted her to stay all night. He soon regained his composure. Mary asked Taliaferro if she could keep the chain that had bound Brown's legs, but he refused. Mary and John Brown now embraced and wept. Mary returned to Harper's Ferry to await the delivery of the coffins of her sons and her husband.<sup>53</sup>

The bodies of neither Oliver nor Watson were brought to

her, however. Oliver had been buried in the woods on the far side of the Shenandoah River, not far from Harper's Ferry. Mary did not feel up to identifying his body so it remained there. Watson's body had been given (if not without the consent then certainly without the disapproval of the "sympathetic" Governor Wise) to the Winchester Medical College for purposes of dissection.

John Brown was hanged at approximately eleven o'clock in the morning on December 2. His coffin was conveyed, with military escort, to Mary Brown and her friends in the afternoon.

John Brown's body was put onto a train bound for Philadelphia. Mary rode with it. A large crowd of Black and white sympathizers had gathered in Philadelphia to greet the widow and pay honor to her husband. There was also a group of anti-Brown forces awaiting the train's arrival. City officials saw to it that the body was smuggled to a waiting boat without being noticed by either group.<sup>54</sup>

The coffin was taken to New York City and then loaded onto an express train bound for upstate New York. On December 6, Mary arrived in North Elba. Her daughters embraced her and there was much weeping.

The funeral was held on December 8, a Thursday. The assembled friends, relatives, neighbors, and comrades were led in singing "Blow Ye the Trumpet Blow" (Brown's favorite hymn) by some of the Black neighbors. Mary watched as John Brown's body was lowered into its North Elba grave. Her life, scarred with hardship and tragedy, had reached its lowest ebb. Of her thirteen children only four remained. Exhausted and depressed, Mary now tried to put the past behind her and turned her eyes to the future.<sup>55</sup>



# AFTER THE EXECUTION

The widow Mary Brown was now confronted with a number of serious problems. She and her family were viewed with contempt by many people in the country. The family was without its "breadwinner" (who had provided precious little bread). Added tragedy came that winter when both Oliver's widow, Martha, and her newborn daughter died.

The prospect of educating Annie and Sarah appeared rather bleak. There were taxes and debts pending. Thomas W. Higginson visited her shortly after the execution and discovered that Mary had given her last ten dollars to one of her poorer Black neighbors.<sup>56</sup>

As before, Mary found allies in other abolitionists. Her friends Higginson, Sanborn, Thaddeus Hyatt, James Redpath, Rebecca Spring, George Stearns, and Lydia Maria Child came to her aid. She received some of the royalties on Redpath's biography of her husband, and she thanked Hyatt for collecting money for "our present and future temporal wants," through the "John Brown Fund."<sup>57</sup>

This assistance helped, but even a year after the initiation of the John Brown Fund she still had to request money of her friends, Samuel E. Sewall for one:

I wrote to Mr. Redpath some time over to know if I could get two hundred dollars from some source (sic) to help me get through the winter and to so fix things on the farm that we can have something at home and not always be entirely dependent on others....I am in great need of the amount I mention. Can I have it?<sup>59</sup>

The education of Mary Brown's daughters Annie and Sarah was seen as part of the John Brown Fund. As early as the fall of 1859 (soon after Harper's Ferry) steps were taken to provide for their education. F.B. Sanborn offered to take the girls into his Concord school in early 1860 and Mary accepted.<sup>60</sup> She herself went to Boston for a short visit several months after. She was warmly welcomed. Louisa May Alcott was present at a gathering of abolitionists at which Mary was honored. She described Mary as "a tall stout woman....with a strong face and natural dignity and showed she was something better than a 'lady' though she did drink

## DISTRIBUTION AND RECEIPTS FOR JOHN BROWN FUND<sup>58</sup>

MARY A. BROWN	\$1250.	\$950.	\$200.
ANN, SARAH and ELLEN	1000.		
JOHN BROWN, JR.	1000.	100.	900.
MARY ANN THOMPSON (Ruth's daughter)	500.	200.	300.
OWEN BROWN	400.	100.	300.
OSBORN P. ANDERSON (A Harper's Ferry fighter)	50.		50.
JASON BROWN	300.		300.
BARCLAY COPPOC (A Harper's Ferry fighter)	50.		50.
SALMON BROWN	200.		200.
RUTH THOMPSON	200.		200.
ISABELLA BROWN	800.	100.	100.
MRS. ANDERSON	50.		
JERRY BROWN (John Brown's brother)	100.		
MRS. LEARY (widow of Harper's Ferry fighter)	250.		
TOTAL	\$6150.	\$1450.	\$2600.

(Thaddeus Hyatt Folder,  
Villard Collection)

JULY 1860



tea out of her saucer."<sup>61</sup>

Mary had received many offers to assist her in educating her daughters, but while she acknowledged the "friendship and benevolence manifested towards me and mine by friends of truth in every section of the North and in Victoria's dominations,"<sup>62</sup> she explained that her husband's closest friends had suggested Sanborn's school.<sup>63</sup>

Mary did not keep her daughters at Concord very long because Sarah became homesick and Annie became disinterested. After the 1861 term Mary enrolled her daughters at Fort Edward Institute near North Elba where they both did much better. Eventually Annie took a teaching job at a school for free Black children in Union-occupied Norfolk, Virginia.<sup>64</sup>

As the Civil War opened, Mary raised no objections to Salmon Brown joining the Union army. Salmon (her last surviving son) gathered a regiment of forty local men and became a lieutenant, but his fellow officers opposed his participation "because they thought my presence would be detrimental to the regiment when it got South." He then resigned and returned to North Elba to work on the farm with his mother.<sup>65</sup>

The grotesquely disfigured condition in which Watson Brown's corpse was discovered did not assuage Mary's feelings toward the slave system, but rather added to her anti-slavery sentiments which had not disappeared after John Brown's execution. Mary learned that Union troops had found the body at Virginia's Winchester Medical College where it had been "preserved." The arteries had been injected, the muscles displayed, the skin torn off and tanned. Truly the body of Mary's son was well-utilized by its Confederate dissectors.<sup>66</sup>

As early as 1860 Mary helped the other Browns in sponsoring a huge July 4 rally in John Brown's memory. Held on her North Elba farm, the event drew 1200 abolitionists who proposed and adopted resolutions supporting the right of every slave to freedom.<sup>67</sup> Mary wrote in December 1860 that the lives to be sacrificed in a war with the slavemasters were a great price to pay, but "I believe that God rules and orders all things for the best and that he is fast undermining the slave power, and that whatever turn things take in the Country it will be for the benefit of the slave."<sup>68</sup>

She looked with great anticipation to the freeing of the slaves and was a regular reader of the Liberator and the National Anti-Slavery Standard.<sup>69</sup>

She praised the Emancipation Proclamation, writing six days after it took effect, "God bless Abraham Lincoln and give God the glory for the day of Jubilee has come."<sup>70</sup> Mary was very much in favor of the recruitment of Black troops by the Union army. She was pleased when they enlisted on a larger scale after the Emancipation Proclamation. "I am very much rejoiced that the collard (sic) people were allowed to fight. I feel that is just as it should be."

Mary read early in 1863 an account in the Liberator of a meeting of abolitionists at the Stearns' home in Massachusetts. These people, she felt, were the "most noble souls that our country contains...." She wrote: "....only those capable of appreciating" John Brown's motives could see the "beauty in them."<sup>71</sup>

Although she favored the war against the slaveowners, the horrors of the combat did not escape her attention. She wrote of the "dreadful war,"<sup>72</sup> this "terrible affliction." Mary wondered how long it would take for justice, truth, mercy and love to become realities; how much longer the slaveowners would persist "in their sins and the innocent have to suffer with the guilty."<sup>73</sup>

Thus Mary retained her anti-slavery beliefs in the years immediately following John Brown's death. She kept in close contact with at least three of the militant Secret Six: Franklin B. Sanborn, Thomas Wentworth Higginson, and especially George L. Stearns. She was also in touch with William Lloyd Garrison and James Redpath, once (unsuccessfully) attempting with the latter to visit Osborn P. Anderson, the sole surviving Black Harper's Ferry Raider.<sup>74</sup> Mary followed closely the activities of other abolitionists and was aware of the latest developments in the struggle against slavery. As in 1859 she had expressed her wish that "some benefit to the poor slaves" would come of John Brown's Raid,<sup>75</sup> so did she declare her hope, after Brown was in the ground, to see "every slave set at liberty."<sup>76</sup>



### THE MOVE WEST

By mid-1863 Mary Brown's conception of her family's future in North Elba began to change. She had been growing tired of the long, harsh winters, of trying to raise crops in fields that would not yield. An uncle of Salmon's wife, Abbie, had visited North Elba after a stay in California. He regaled the family with his tales of that state. Soon all the Browns were considering emigration to the West. They discussed it and finally resolved, in Abbie Brown's words, "to emigrate to that land of golden opportunities."<sup>77</sup>

Several things may have motivated Mary to go west. She felt the move "would give Annie and Sarah a chance to do something for themselves in a new country they cannot have here."<sup>78</sup> In North Elba she had been frequently ill, and the climate, "six months winter and the other six months very cold weather,"<sup>79</sup> was not helpful to her health. Terrible things had occurred during her time at North Elba. The bones of her husband, and those of other relatives, were buried in the soil of her unproductive farm. In short, there was very little that was pleasant for her there.

On September 2, 1863 she wrote to J.M. McKim: "I expect to leave this place soon." She also mentioned that another tragedy had struck the family: Freddy, son of Watson and Isabella, had died of diphtheria.<sup>80</sup>

Several weeks later Mary, Ellen, Sarah and Salmon and his family left North Elba. Annie was still teaching in Norfolk; she would join the family within several weeks.

The Browns were driven to the railroad station at Keene, New York by a Black neighbor, Lyman Epps. None of them realized the dangers ahead. Mary and her family were to be confronted by slavery's adherents in a manner only Salmon, in the Kansas wars, had ever approximated.<sup>81</sup>

Mary and the other Browns stopped first in Ohio. They rested for a few days at the farm of John Brown, Jr. in Put-in-Bay. Owen and Jason lived nearby. Sarah decided to remain with John and Owen for a while. The others took a train for the midwest.

The family's plans altered somewhat when they reached Iowa. So impressed were they with the countryside that they elected to settle there. They bought a farm in Decorah, in the

northern part of the state. Residents of the area greeted them with "good wishes," according to the New York Tribune.<sup>82</sup>

Salmon became a sheep raiser and eventually raised quail and other game. The family did not prosper. Mary wrote to Owen on January 31, 1864 that while Decorah natives had never seen such sheep as Salmon had brought, Salmon was nevertheless compelled to do other labor to keep the family going. One week, noted Mary, "he earned twelve dollars....chopping cord wood at six shillings per cord".<sup>83</sup>

The Browns were not nearly as destitute in Decorah as they had been in North Elba. Although Mary regretted ever spending "a cent on that farm in North Elba" and admitted "I did not know what I do now," it is evident that the Browns were not wanting for money. Salmon's work provided a regular, if barely adequate, source of income.<sup>84</sup> But because the winter of 1863-1864 was one of the coldest the local residents could recall, and the Browns had bitter memories of the comparable periods of discomfiture in upstate New York, they began to think again of California. Sarah became quite ill upon her arrival in Decorah from Put-in-Bay. Because scarlet fever was about and her children and grand children had all been sick, Mary was fearful of staying in Decorah much longer.



### CONFRONTATION ON THE PLAINS

As Spring began, the Browns began to prepare for the 2,000 mile trek west in three ox-driven wagons.<sup>85</sup> Mary and her daughters Annie, Ellen and Sarah were in one, Salmon and Abbie Brown and their daughters occupied another; and two young men who had asked to go along were in the third. In their wagon Salmon stored hardtack, beef sausage, fruit, and potatoes. In addition the Browns took several cows and six Merino sheep.<sup>86</sup>

News of their departure for California preceded them along the way. A "man from Decorah.... told a newspaperman in Omaha that the widow and son of John Brown were on their way to California and the newspaper published it."<sup>87</sup> The family went south toward Des Moines and then headed for Council Bluffs where they were to cross the Missouri River by ferry. At Council Bluffs they found 500 other wagons waiting transport across the river. For a few days the Browns were unable to continue. Finally their turn came and soon they set foot on the Nebraska side of the river, in Omaha, where they restocked their provisions.

Mary and her family joined a wagon train headed for Denver. Salmon drove the first wagon while Mary helped her daughters drive the second. In the third wagon, driven by the two young men (their names are given only as George and Mr. Smith) rode the Brown's sheep.

When the train halted Mary's youngest granddaughter was tied, by her mother or by Mary, to a wagon wheel to prevent her from wandering about. As commonly occurred on such trips the motion of the wagons tended to turn much of the milk obtained from the cows into butter. Abbie observed that both the milk and the butter "helped materially with our meals."<sup>88</sup>

The captain of their train was one Woodruff, a proud Union man. The stars and stripes flew over one of his wagons. This greatly angered many people who identified with the Confederacy. Salmon recalled, "...there were lots of southern sympathizers from Missouri on their way west."<sup>89</sup>

It does not appear that these particular "southern sympathizers" paid too much attention to Mary and her kin. But Woodruff's flying of the American flag was the direct precipitant of an incident. The Southerners demanded of Woodruff that he remove the flag and threatened to do it themselves if he did not

comply. Woodruff, backed by the Unionists in the wagon train, refused. He told his critics "they would have a fight on their hands" if they "undertook to take down" the flag, according to Abbie Brown. Violence seemed imminent. But the rebels were not in the majority, and Woodruff commanded great admiration and respect among the others because he did not budge from his pro-Union stance in the face of rebel threats. Therefore, the "incident" did not develop into something larger. The wagon train proceeded, though tension seethed within.

The Browns remained with the train for several days until it reached Ft. Kearny. Here they separated from the other wagons and took the Oregon trail along the north side of the Platte River. A few days later they met a party from Indiana that received them warmly. Many in the Indiana party were Black. "They seemed to know who we were and were very friendly," commented Abbie Brown.<sup>90</sup>

Like other wagon trains, the one the Browns were in passed through Indian lands. For their protection the Browns decided to join the Indiana party. The members of the newly formed train, including Mary, chose to affiliate with an even larger train that soon overtook them. Only hours after this amalgamation the wagon train was harassed by several hundred Sioux. But nobody was attacked; the train proceeded with the Sioux alongside until the Indians finally rode off. Just as in 1855 a relative had written Mary from Kansas that "the Indians....are the least of my troubles," so too would Mary find that the greatest threat came not from the Indians whose land she crossed, but from certain men in white skins.<sup>91</sup>

Unlike the train led by Woodruff, the larger one the Browns joined consisted mainly of "southern sympathizers" including members and deserters from the Confederate army. Many of these were from Tennessee and Missouri. It is quite possible that the people of this train knew that John Brown's widow was traveling west.

Whether they heard it by rumor, through the press or from hearsay is not known. But they definitely found out that the Browns were in their train. What began as anti-Brown mutterings soon developed into an anti-Brown plot. The travelers from Indiana sensed the hostility and urged Mary and the others to break away from their enemies before it was too late. The Browns, too, realized that something was wrong. As the wagon train neared Sublette's Cut-off at the South Pass the danger increased sharply, and four of the Browns sheep were poisoned.

The party from Indiana heard talk of murder and rushed to tell the Browns. Apparently the rebels planned to kill them



shortly. Two members of the Confederate group, young men from Virginia, defected and came to reveal the full plot to Mary and the others. Salmon Brown remembered:

They told us that while they, like most of the rest of the train, were Southerners, they did not want to see us come to harm. They told us that a party had been made up of some of the roughest elements to kill our party for the part John Brown and his family had taken against the south at Harper's Ferry. This was Saturday afternoon and the plan was to kill us next day.<sup>92</sup>

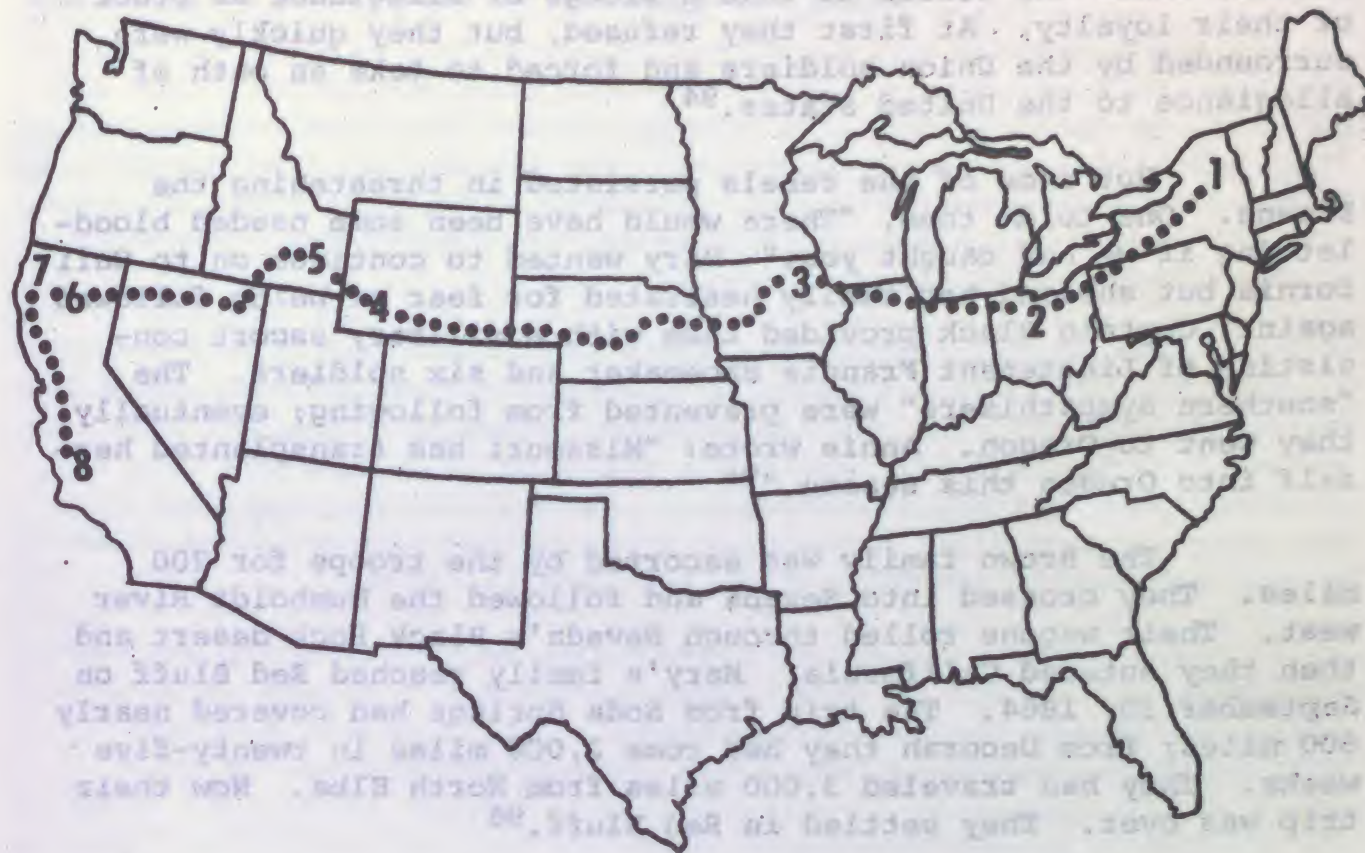
Mary and her family prepared to get away as soon as possible. The Indiana party left that very night. The Browns followed several hours later. Their absence was quickly detected and several men went after them. Salmon, with gun in hand, told them that the Browns were simply going to camp over the "next rise." The men allowed them to continue, perhaps thinking it inadvisable to attack at that point, and unaware that their intentions had been discovered.

"We went over the next rise and kept going," said Salmon, "traveling with all deliberate speed," until the Browns overtook their Indiana friends. But the entire rebel camp was pursuing them, barely three hours behind. One of the Browns' wagons overturned and valuable time was expended in righting it. Abbie Brown related that she could see the big wagon train off in the distance.

In the East, rumors of a tragic end for Mary Brown and the others were mentioned in the press. The New York Tribune (September 22, 1864) reported a "painful rumor, not yet confirmed, that after leaving Missouri, it having been ascertained that they were John Brown's family, that they were pursued by Missouri guerillas, captured, robbed, and murdered." (The Browns had not been in Missouri, having crossed the Missouri River from Iowa directly to Nebraska). The Commonwealth of Boston (September 23, 1864) stated: "Nothing could be more natural than, once known to the Missourians of the guerilla order, they should be thus victimized."<sup>93</sup>

But Mary and the Browns were not dead. They crossed from Wyoming into Idaho and approached Soda Springs, where there was a Union outpost at Camp Connor. After a week of being chased by the Southerners they arrived, breathless and exhausted, in Soda Springs, their antagonists still three hours behind.

## OVERLAND JOURNEY OF MARY BROWN



1 - Left North Elba, September, 1863

2 - Put-in-Bay, Ohio

3 - Decorah, Iowa. Late 1863, early 1864.  
Left Decorah April 10, 1864

4 - Sublette's Cut-Off, Wyoming, South Pass.  
Brown's threatened by "Southern Sympathizers".

5 - Soda Springs, Idaho.  
Browns protected by Federal troops.

6 - Red Bluff, California.  
Browns arrived September 30, 1864.

7 - Rohnerville, California.  
Mary moved here in 1870.

8 - Saratoga, California.  
Mary moved here in 1881.



allegiance to the United States.<sup>94</sup>

But some of the rebels persisted in threatening the Browns. One told them, "There would have been some needed blood-letting if we had caught you." Mary wanted to continue on to California but she and her family hesitated for fear of being followed again. Captain Black provided them with a military escort consisting of Lieutenant Francis Shoemaker and six soldiers. The "southern sympathizers" were prevented from following; eventually they went to Oregon. Annie wrote: "Missouri has transplanted herself into Oregon this season."<sup>95</sup>

The Brown family was escorted by the troops for 200 miles. They crossed into Nevada and followed the Humboldt River west. Their wagons rolled through Nevada's Black Rock desert and then they entered California. Mary's family reached Red Bluff on September 30, 1864. The trip from Soda Springs had covered nearly 600 miles; from Decorah they had come 2,000 miles in twenty-five weeks. They had traveled 3,000 miles from North Elba. Now their trip was over. They settled in Red Bluff.<sup>96</sup>

From up close, from the vantage point of a potential victim, Mary now saw and felt the hatred of her antagonists for John Brown and all that he stood for. She had left North Elba during the Civil War and anti-Brown feelings amongst many Southerners was still strong. Face-to-face with "southern sympathizers," the hardship of the western trip was compounded by the death threats they received. Fleeing "southern sympathizers" was hardly the way for Mary to open the new chapter of her life. The trip was nearly fatal but for the assistance of the integrated pro-Union party from Indiana and the intervention of the army outpost at Soda Springs. Mary's anti-slavery sentiments must have been strengthened by such an experience.

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the scene of what would be her happiest years.

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## NORTHERN CALIFORNIA

Annie Brown described Red Bluff as "a small business town on the right bank of the Sacramento River at the head of navigation." The Brown's early days in this town were very difficult. They had arrived, in Abbie's words, "a hungry, almost barefoot, ragged lot." They had little means of support.<sup>97</sup> Salmon did odd jobs around town, eventually earning enough to become a sheep raiser. For several months the presence of Mary and her family was known only to their most immediate neighbors.

As the winter of 1864-1865 came to a close (and the Union army in the East moved toward its triumph) word began to spread in Red Bluff and environs that Mary Brown, widow of "Captain" John Brown of Harper's Ferry, was now a resident, and none too well off at that. Many of the townspeople collected clothing and furniture for Mary and her kin. Salmon got a better job and was soon able to buy a 128-acre ranch on which to raise his sheep.

The local press ran articles on Mary. In April 1865 a committee was formed to raise funds to build a home and provide a secure existence for the "Widow Brown". California's Governor F.F. Low was a member of the state executive committee of this group.<sup>98</sup>

The "John Brown Cottage Fund" was initiated. The Red Bluff Weekly Independent of April 13, 1865 reported: "A one dollar subscription has been started in Sacramento and is also proposed to have a Calico Party for the 'John Brown Cottage.' That is the eloquence of the action, Red Bluff will be heard from soon. Every town in the State should send its mite to assist in this enterprise."

Citizens met on April 17, 1865, according to a Red Bluff native, for "the purpose of raising funds for the purchasing and furnishing a neat little home for Mrs. Mary A. Brown, where her declining years may be made comfortable in a home of her own."<sup>99</sup>

The campaign broadened and picked up pace throughout the spring. Branches were established all over northern California. The Independent again called for contributions: "If every man, woman and child in California who has hummed 'John Brown's Body Lies a Moulding in the Grave' will throw in a dime, his family will have a home." The John Brown Cottage Fund's appeal was not as much to charity as it was to the peoples' sense of solidarity with Mary Brown and the cause with which she was connected.<sup>100</sup> The Semi-Weekly Independent (June 5, 1865) wrote: "We hope all true

and loyal men will come forward with their contributions and place the widow and children of John Brown in a position where want will not intrude in the future as it has in the past." Citizens were asked to demonstrate their fidelity to "John Brown's cause" by giving what they could.

Four lots (numbers 9 through 12) were purchased by the Fund by the end of 1865. Construction of a cottage was begun. But Mary Brown's right to this newly bought land was challenged. One Amanda J. Hoag filed suit in Probate Court on February 18, 1866, claiming that lots "9-10-11-12" had been given to her by her brother. Mary testified that the land was hers; she showed, through her attorneys, that the lots in question had been used by over fifty citizens for purposes of trade previous to her ownership. The Judge ruled in Mary's favor on March 2, 1866. A cottage was therefore built for her on that land.<sup>101</sup>

During the campaign to build and furnish a cottage, Mary Brown drew close to the temperance movement. She was among the initiators, in 1865 of the Red Bluff Lodge of the Independent Order of Good Templars. From the outset she held positions of responsibility, starting as an Outside Guard and being elected Worthy Vice Templar in mid-October 1865.<sup>102</sup>

During her years in Red Bluff, Mary herself (in addition to Annie and Sarah) contributed to the family income by working as a nurse and a midwife. Leo L. McCoy remembered her as a "kindly woman" who "rendered much service to the families of Red Bluff in the way of nursing the sick."

Sarah taught at the "Antelope School", her sister Annie at a school for Black children at the nearby Colony for Colored Folks. Annie boarded with the Logans, a Black family.<sup>103</sup>

From 1865 to 1870 Mary enjoyed a degree of security and acceptance that she had never known before. She became known in a community that backed her morally, financially and politically. She was involved in a variety of activities and services. Never did people view her, however, as simply a doer of good deeds. To her great pride she was always identified with the abolitionist cause. But there is no doubt that she existed in John Brown's shadow. She was respected and admired more as the widow of a martyr than as a contributor in her own right and in her own way. The Speaker of the U.S. House of Representatives (and later Vice-President), Schuyler Colfax of Indiana, visited Mary in 1865 and told her that "the nation was indebted to her husband for awakening the people to the menace of slavery."<sup>104</sup>



Mary's health was not suited to the Red Bluff climate. She and her daughters decided to move closer to the ocean. In 1870 they moved to Rohnerville about sixty-five miles away in neighboring Humboldt County, with Salmon and his family.<sup>105</sup>

Rohnerville was smaller than Red Bluff. Mary bought a house and an acre of land for \$125. Salmon moved in next door and also bought a 40 acre ranch, in Bridgeville, on which to raise his sheep.<sup>106</sup>

Thanks to the support she had obtained in Red Bluff, Mary experienced no financial difficulties in her new home. While there was no hostility expressed toward her, she was more of a novelty in this town. The solidarity exhibited in Red Bluff seems to have been lacking in Rohnerville. The nature of her reception in Red Bluff can be attributed in part to the immediacy of her needs and the contemporaneousness of the Civil War. It is not unlikely that many Red Bluff citizens had been abolitionists for a number of years.

One Rohnerville native described a "visit" to Mary's home as a little girl. A friend of her's suggested, "Let's go see John Brown's widow." The children ran off to Mary's house and "just stood and stared at Mrs. Brown while she sat there in her chair, apparently giving little notice to them or their manners."<sup>107</sup>

In Rohnerville, as in Red Bluff, Mary engaged in many community activities. Here too, she practiced midwifery and nursing, and was known to local citizens as an understanding, kind woman.

In 1870 a group of French philanthropists and humanitarians gathered in Paris to discuss how they could honor the "Old Man" of Harper's Ferry and pay homage to his widow. Among these French citizens were political and cultural figures, including Louis Blanc. First and foremost of their number was the brilliant author Victor Hugo who had many times expressed his admiration for Mary's husband and the anti-slavery cause.

In 1874 the product of this assemblage, a John Brown Medal, was molded and shaped by Wunder of Burssels, and sent off in finished form to Mary Brown, with an accompanying letter.

Madame, - Many years have passed away since the day when your noble husband completed the sacrifice of a life devoted to the most benevolent of causes. From the gallows where he hung has gone forth this cry of

universal indignation, which has been the signal for the complete deliverance of a disinherited race. Honor to him, and his worthy sons, together with his widow! To the benedictions which the present century will follow their memory, those of future centuries will be added.....

The medal, now in the Kansas Historical Society, was engraved with this inscription:

To the memory of John Brown, judicially murdered at Charlestown in Virginia, on 2nd of December, 1859, and in commemoration of his sons and comrades, who with him became the victims of their devotion to the cause of Negro emancipation.<sup>108</sup>

As time went on Mary began to think of moving into the mountains for health reasons. By 1880 she and Sarah were decidedly in favor of such a move, not to the "hills" where Salmon's family had moved, but rather to the mountains of central California. Ellen Brown and her new husband, James Fablinger, had been living with Mary and they too looked favorably on the proposed shift to another climate at a higher elevation. In January, 1881, Mary left Rohnerville for Saratoga, over 300 miles to the south.



### THE LAST YEARS

Saratoga was a very small town near San Jose in Santa Clara County. Sarah had gone there first to find a place to live. Her arrival created quite a stir. A current of hostility developed when her purpose and the coming of Mary Brown were made known. The cry "The Browns are coming," went up. A great number of Saratoga citizens were former "southern sympathizers"; with Mary's coming they brought their Confederate "sympathies" up-to-date.

Mary bought a home in Saratoga. In fact she went into debt, "purchasing" a 160 acre farm for \$1850. At first she had little contact with the Saratoga Community. Her children and grandchildren were completely ostracized from their peers.

But not all people in Saratoga were anti-Brown. A group of residents discovered that neither Mary and Sarah nor the Fablingers could meet the schedule of payments for their mountain home. They set up a relief fund. Sarah told a San Francisco Chronicle reporter on April 10, 1881, that her mother had "earned the right to expect some such aid, although she has never asked for it."

A large amount of money was collected. Mary was able to purchase the house. The people of Saratoga gradually came to admire Mary's determination to stay there despite the initial hostilities. The Confederate elements found themselves increasingly isolated. Many people began to visit Mary regularly. The three mile hike to her home came to be something of a pilgrimage.<sup>109</sup>

In April 1881 Mary Brown was interviewed for the first time since her trip to Charlestown. The reporter noted that pictures of Oliver, Watson and John Brown hung over the organ in the parlor. He inquired, like many before him, about her husband's "fanaticism," his alleged insanity. Mary answered: "He was anything but a fanatic. He was a clear-headed, sober-minded man in business, and was no less sober-minded, if more pertinacious, in his views on slavery. He abhorred the institution as a menace to the Union and for its own wrongs against humanity."<sup>110</sup>

Mary became 65 years old in 1881. She wanted to see her husband's grave once more, and to visit the sites of his Kansas battles. (She had sold the North Elba farm in 1866 but had reserved the family plot.) There were many relatives, friends, and other abolitionists whom she desired to thank for their assistance.

In the summer of 1882 Mary went to Chicago. On the first of September a mammoth reception was held in her honor at Farwell Hall. Chicago's leading citizens sat with her on the stage. Illinois State Attorney L.L. Mills expressed, in his keynote address, the sentiments of Mary and others on John Brown's "fanaticism."

Call it not fanaticism at this late day. It was thoughtful philosophy and the "courage of convictions." It was the modern Cromwellian assault; it was '76 against Great Britain repeated in a following generation against slavery. Fanaticism, blind following of impulse -- was anti-slavery this?

Mills directed special remarks to Mary Brown, referring to her as the "Esteemed lady, whom we delight to honor," stressing that she would "never be a stranger to our hearts."<sup>111</sup>

As Mills concluded, a group of Black soldiers, to a great ovation, entered the hall. The Reverend J.A. Poss, a Black minister, speaking "in the name of ten thousand of the colored race in Chicago and six million in the United States," paid honor to John Brown's memory and demanded strict enforcement of Charles Sumner's civil rights law.<sup>112</sup>

Finally, Mary Brown was introduced. "As she stepped to the front of the stage the whole audience rose, and with waving hats and handkerchiefs and with loud shouts welcomed her," according to the Chicago Daily Inter Ocean. The Daily News reported that Mary bowed "repeatedly" to the storm of cheering and applause, and the Tribune observed that the "Lady bowed her acknowledgments but spoke no word."<sup>113</sup>

This reception was not the most important part of her visit to Chicago. A Martinsville, Indiana, physician upon learning she was in Chicago, wrote her that he was in possession of the remains of Watson Brown. He claimed the body was given to him by one General Banks after the capture of Winchester, Virginia. Mary contacted John Brown Jr. in Put-in-Bay, who came immediately to Martinsville to try to identify the skeleton. There was still a name tag, with Watson's name, attached to the bones. John Jr., a student of phrenology, measured the cranium and was convinced that these were Watson's remains.

He sent the remains to Put-in-Bay. Mary met him there, with Jason and Owen. Together they "identified" Watson Brown.



Mary wrote Salmon on September 16, 1882: "The country is all awake to the fact that one of John Brown's sons should have been kept amongst them for over twenty years...." And the next day she reported: "The box that contains the remains of Watson was opened today, everything goes to prove that it is poor Watson. There is nothing about the appearance to tell whom it is."<sup>114</sup>

Mary took the remains to North Elba. John Jr., Owen, Jason, and others of the family accompanied her from Put-in-Bay. Watson's widow, who had remarried, stood beside her mother-in-law at Watson's grave.

Mary also visited the graves of the children who had died very young. She traveled through Pennsylvania (she was given a reception in Philadelphia) and Ohio. Affairs were also held for her in Boston and Springfield. After several months in the East she started back to California.

She made one more important stop, the battlegrounds of the Kansas war. Mary was honored at a rally in Topeka, Kansas, where a newspaper noted that the November, 1882, event was held in the Senate chamber. The hall was filled to capacity. Governor St. John presided and welcomed Mary to Kansas. T. Dwight Thacher recounted Mary's tour and described the burial of Watson. Senator Preston Plumb and August Bondi, a close John Brown associate, also addressed the throng. A local Black cornet band performed, and as the meeting terminated "the large audience pressed forward to shake hands with Mrs. Brown as they passed from the chamber, thus closing one of the most memorable gatherings ever held in this city."<sup>115</sup>

Mary returned to California at the end of 1882. She was well satisfied with her trip. "I had such a good visit all around where I went it seems that everything was made doubly pleasant for me...."<sup>116</sup> She found problems at home. Her farm had not been very productive. The salary of her son-in-law, James Fablinger, was not enough to offset these problems. Mary decided to sell the farm in the mountains. She and the Fablingers moved into town, in the valley, where they rented a house.

Mary, soon after her move to Saratoga, went north to visit Salmon and his family in Bridgeville, near Rohnerville. There she became ill with what F.B. Sanborn described as a "lingering disease."

With her health worsening daily she chose to live with Sarah in San Francisco. Sarah (who was closer to Mary than any of her other children) watched over her and brought her under intensive medical treatment. But it was evident that her mother

was dying.

Though the trip East had been an exhilarating and moving experience for Mary, it had severely strained her physically. No longer able to rebound from illness as in the past, she was now, at the age of 67, more susceptible to it. The disease "lingered" and finally it took her. On February 29, 1884, with Sarah at her side, Mary Brown died.<sup>117</sup>



## MARY BROWN: A SUMMATION

For many years, abolitionists constituted a minority of the white population. They held to their beliefs despite the dominance of pro-slavery ideology. Inevitably, one's view of John Brown and the anti-slavery movement will condition one's view of Mary Brown. So too will one's opinion of Mary be influenced by one's assessment of the contributions of so-called ordinary people.

Mary's life from 1859 to 1884 was characterized by more than "wifely devotion" to John Brown's cause. Indeed she had her own real opinions. These led her to refuse to testify to her husband's "insanity," even if it would have saved his life.

It is obvious that more than an "uncomprehending adaptability to fact" (Warren, p. 29) is involved. The "facts" of Mary's life were not happy ones. The poverty, disease, deaths, threats, the execution of her husband, the "identification" of the bones of her offspring, were not things to which she could "adapt." Tragedy marked her life. Like any wife and mother, like any thinking human being, she felt it.

She was a simple, plain woman, but she was knowledgeable and she did not waver from her position. The evidence to that effect is quite clear. Her life was rough and she was indeed a brave woman to go through what she did and to emerge time and again, her heart in sorrow, but her convictions intact.

It was not necessary to persuade Mary of the righteousness of actively confronting slavery. As Annie and Sarah Brown recalled, Mary was often involved in the preparations for the activities of her husband and her sons. She discussed the raid on Harper's Ferry with John Brown long before it happened. At one point she complained to her husband of the hesitation of several of her sons in following their father's example.<sup>118</sup> She maintained both before and after Brown's execution that the source of the Harper's Ferry Raid lay not in the "deranged" mind of her husband but in the system of slavery itself. In her last interview, as in her first, she pointed out that the Harper's Ferry Raid was a reaction to the institution of slavery which was "a menace to the Union," and she decried slavery's "wrongs against humanity." More than blind following is involved here. Mary Brown was a woman of conviction.

John Brown's influence on Mary Brown was undoubtedly tremendous. They were married for more than a quarter of a century. Mary did not alter her views one iota after her husband was killed. She did not abandon her beliefs even when she moved through, and lived in, locations far from the scenes of battle.

Mary Brown does not "stand out." She was not an articulate or "refined" woman. She spoke little and often drank tea from the saucer instead of the cup. Some of her acquaintances regarded her as "coarse." Thus one said, years later: "She was a coarse sort of woman without much sensibility. She was no help to her husband; merely no hindrance. She took care of the family. She was good for that."<sup>119</sup> And another, also many years later, contended that Mary was "coarse clay. She had really very little feeling. She did not actually suffer very much. Yet this may have been the callousness of long years of hardship and sorrow.... She had room to become inured to pain. But she was a coarse woman. She did not feel much."<sup>120</sup>

Mary Brown knew what was going on. She never became "inured to pain," either her's or anyone else's. Indeed, she maintained that the suffering of any people often made her "feel to cry out...."<sup>121</sup> But neither did she collapse when tragedy struck; her ideals did not falter in spite of her "afflictions." The evidence shows that she understood quite well the key issues of her time and identified with the struggle against slavery and racism.

During the weeks after Harper's Ferry and before Brown's execution, when anti-Brown sentiment was at its height, she said that she sympathized with the Raid. She told the New York Times that for twenty years she had been looking forward to such an event, and she wrote several sympathizers that she hoped Brown and the others had not died in vain in their "attack on that great evil - American slavery."<sup>122</sup> She remarked to her husband of the "good this sacrifice has done or is likely to do for the oppressed,"<sup>123</sup> and reported to Thomas W. Higginson that while she grieved over her terrible losses, she wished "that Providence may bring out of it some benefit to the poor slaves."

Her anti-slavery sentiments endured after Brown's execution. She remained in close communication with abolitionists before and throughout the Civil War. The trip east in 1882 is illustrative of an on-going commitment, for she chose to visit her fellow abolitionists. She took the initiative in contacting her allies of old. And she was received as an ally, as witnessed by the huge rallies in Chicago and Topeka.



The "long years of hardship and sorrow" did not make her "callous." There is a difference between strength and callousness and it was the former rather than the latter that typified Mary Brown. The perseverance and courage of Mary Brown and people like her were at the heart of the anti-slavery effort.

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## REFERENCE NOTES

Note: The following abbreviations denote the manuscript collections consulted.

H.L.H.S. Hudson Library and Historical Society, Hudson, Ohio

S.C. Boyd S. Stutler Collection (Microfilm: 8 reels; original at Charleston, West Virginia) Yale University, New Haven, CT.

V.C. Villard Collection, Columbia University, New York City

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Sanborn's is easily the best of these, containing many letters and documents previously unpublished.
3. Stephen B. Oates, To Purge this Land with Blood (Evanston, 1970); Oswald Garrison Villard, John Brown: A Biography Fifty Years After (Boston, 1909); Richard O. Boyer, The Legend of John Brown (New York, 1973).
4. Hill Peebles Wilson, John Brown: Soldier of Fortune. A Critique. (Lawrence, 1913); Robert Penn Warren, John Brown: The Making of a Martyr (New York, 1929).
5. Howard Zinn, The Politics of History (Boston, 1970), p. 165
6. Warren, p. 420
7. Warren, p. 29
8. Warren, p. 29



9. Warren, p. 226
10. Sanborn, p. 498-499
11. Barrie Stavis, John Brown: The Sword and the Word (South Brunswick and New York, 1970), p. 29
12. M.H.F., "The Wife of Captain John Brown of Osawatimie," Overland Monthly, October, 1885, Vol. VI, Second Series, No. 34, p. 360; excerpts from notebook of Dr. Clarence Holden, in Local History Sketches (Whitehall Times, March 1916-July 1918) comments that Whitehall and environs had little slavery after the late 18th century.
13. Interview with Sarah Brown, by K. Mayo, September 16 and 20, 1908, V.C.; (Ms. Mayo adds: "This story Miss Sarah has often heard from her mother.")
14. Brown married Dianthe Lusk in 1820. She was a year his junior; they had seven children: John Jr. (b. 1821), Jason (b. 1823), Owen (b. 1824), Frederick (b. 1827-31), Ruth (b. 1829), Frederick (b. 1830-56, killed in Kansas), and an infant son (b. 1832, died three days after birth). See Sanborn, p. 35.  
Dianthe Lusk's nieces alleged that their aunt was mistreated by John Brown. Luch Lusk (daughter of Fianthe's brother Milton) was unable, on December 21, 1908, to specify what the "treatment was," but she knew that "her father strongly resented it, and said that John Brown was a tyrant at home," (Interview by K. May, V.C.). This was denied by certain other Browns, among them Wealthy Brown (wife of John Jr.) who told Ms. Mayo (January 27, 1909), "I have never heard him (John Brown)....speak of her except in the most endearing terms...." (V.C.)
15. Ernest C. Miller, "John Brown's Ten Years in Northwestern Pennsylvania," Pennsylvania History, January, 1948, p. 2 p. 28-29; Boyer, p. 251-252; Sanborn, p. 42-43; Oates, p. 168-169.

#### Mary and John Brown's Children

Sarah, b. May 11, 1834	Austin, b. Sept. 14, 1842
Watson, b. Oct. 7, 1835	Anne, b. Dec. 23, 1843
Salmon, b. Oct. 2, 1836	Amelia, b. June 22, 1845
Charles, b. Nov. 3, 1837	Sarah, b. Sept. 11, 1846
Oliver, b. Mar. 9, 1839	Ellen, b. May 20, 1848
Peter, b. Dec. 7, 1840	infant son, b. Apr. 26, 1852
Ellen, b. Sept. 25, 1854	

- Dr. Clarence S. Gee, the Brown genealogist, observed that sorrow marked much of the Brown's family life. "In 1843 Sarah (1), Charles, Peter, and Austin died within a few weeks in an epidemic of dysentery; Amelia died from scalding accident, in 1846; Ellen (1), an infant, died at Springfield, Mass. in her father's arms; an infant son, unnamed, lived less than a month, died in 1852." (from Dr. Gee, excerpts from notebooks, in Gee to author, November 25, 1974)
17. Interview with Sarah Brown, by K. Mayo, September 16 and 20, 1908, V.C.
18. Thomas Wentworth Higginson, Contemporaries (Cambridge, 1899), p. 238-239
19. Ruth Brown Thompson, in Louis Ruchames, ed., John Brown: The Making of a Revolutionary (New York, 1971), p. 186; Interview with Sarah Brown, by K. Mayo, Sept. 16 and 20, 1908, V.C.; Ruth Brown Thompson, March 10, 1850, V.C.
20. Oates, p. 26; Richard Dana, "How we met John Brown," Atlantic Monthly, July 1871; Sanborn, p. 106
21. Mary A. Brown to John Brown, Jr., November 8, 1849, H.L. H.S. See: Benjamin Quarles, Black Abolitionists (New York, 1969), p. 33, 87, 109, 151; Herbert Aptheker, To Be Free: Studies in Afro-American History, (New York, 1948), p. 54; Grace Goulder Izant (with Dr. Clarence S. Gee), "John Brown's Wives," in Izant, Ohio Scenes and Citizens (Cleveland and New York, 1964), p. 202; Eleanor Flexner, A Century of Struggle: The Woman's Rights Movement in the United States (New York, 1970), p. 44; Herbert Aptheker, Documentary History I, p. 149-151, 162, 165, 211  
David Ruggles was executive secretary of the New York Committee of Vigilance (which aided escaped slaves), had helped to found a Black high school in New York, and worked on The Emancipator as well as his own Mirror of Liberty newspaper.
22. Interview with Mrs. Porter Hall by K. Mayo, December 22, 1908, V.C.
23. John Brown to Mary A. Brown, September 12, 1858; John Brown to Mary A. Brown, April 27, 1858, S.C.
24. Mary A. Brown to John Brown, May 20, 1856, H.L.H.S.



The Browns lived in North Elba from 1849 to 1851, then moved back to Akron, Ohio. They returned to North Elba in 1854.

25. John Brown to Mary A. Brown, March 7, 1847, V.C.
26. Interview with Mrs. Danley Hobart, by K. Mayo, December 1908, in Boyer, p. 342.  
Mrs. Hobart was the daughter of Levi Blakelee, John Brown's adopted brother.
27. John Brown to Mary A. Brown and children, March 1858, V.C.; Frederick Douglass to Mary A. Brown, enclosed in John Brown to Mary A. Brown and children, January 30, 1858, V.C.; John Brown to Mary A. Brown, March 2, 1858, V.C.; John Brown to Mary A. Brown and children, May 12, 1858, S.C.; John Brown to Mary A. Brown and children, July 1858, S.C.; Earl Conrad, Harriet Tubman (New York, 1942), p. 24-26; John Brown to Mary A. Brown and children, September 15, 1855, S.C.; John Brown to Mary A. Brown and children, October 13, 1855, V.C.
28. Interview with Sarah Brown, by K. Mayo, September 16 and 20, 1908, V.C.  
Annie Brown had known of "the plan" since she was very young. She had overheard her parents discussing an armed assault, naming Harper's Ferry as the site of attack. See Truman Nelson, The Old Man: John Brown at Harper's Ferry (New York, Chicago, San Francisco, 1973), p. 64; Izant, p. 208.
29. Sanborn, p. 116-117
30. Theodore Tilton, "Interview with the Wife of John Brown," New York Times, November 18, 1859.
31. Villard, p. 401; Oates, p. 272-273.
32. John Brown to Mary A. Brown, July 5, 1859, in Velma West Sykes, "Daughter Helped John Brown keep Plot Secret," Kansas City Times, October 17, 1967; See also Warren, p. 323; Sanborn, p. 529-530; Izant, p. 209.
33. John Brown to Mary A. Brown and children, August 2, 1859, S.C.
34. Oates, p. 290-302

35. Salmon Brown, "Personal Recollections of My Father," Portland Evening Telegraph, October 30, 1906, V.C.; Annie Brown Adams to Richard Hinton, May 23, 1893, V.C.; Ruth Brown Thompson to George L. Stearns, January 17, 1860, S.C.
36. Tilton, "Interview with the Wife of John Brown," New York Times, November 18, 1859
37. Oates, p. 324-327.
38. Tilton, "Interview with the Wife of John Brown," New York Times, November 18, 1859.
39. J.M. McKim, "Mrs. John Brown and Her Family," National Anti-Slavery Standard, December 3, 1859.
40. John Brown to Mary A. Brown, October 31, 1859, S.C.; Oates, p. 336; Higginson to Sarah and Annie Brown, November 4, 1859, H.L.H.S.; Higginson to his mother, November 5, 1859, in Mary Thatcher Higginson, ed., Letters and Journals of Thomas Wentworth Higginson, (Boston, New York, 1921), p. 86-87.
41. Baltimore American, November 7, 1859.
42. George Sennott to T.W. Higginson, November 5, 1859, V.C.
43. George H. Hoyt to Mary A. Brown, November 11, 1859, H.L.H.S.
44. John Brown to Mary A. Brown and children, November 8, 1859, Ruchames, p. 140-141.
45. Mary A. Brown to John Brown, November 14, 1859, V.C.
46. John Brown to Mary A. Brown, November 16, 1859, Ruchames, p. 145-146
47. McKim to Garrison, November 25, 1859, H.L.H.S. See also: Higginson to McKim, November 13, 1859, V.C.; Higginson to Mary A. Brown, November 13, 1859, V.C.
48. Mary A. Brown to Wise, November 21, 1859, V.C.; Wise to Mary A. Brown, November 26, 1859, S.C.; Wise to Taliaferro, November 26, 1859, S.C.
49. John Brown to Mary A. Brown, November 26, 1859, Ruchames,



p. 159-160.

Mary had written to him two days earlier, remarking on the "good this sacrifice has done, or is likely to do for the oppressed." (Mary A. Brown to John Brown, November 24, 1859, V.C.)

50. Boston Herald, December 3, 1859.
51. Oates, p. 335-336; New York Age, March 8, 1884; "The Arrival of Mrs. Brown," The Liberator, December 9, 1859; Frank Leslie's Illustrated Newspaper, December 17, 1859.
52. J.M. Ashley to McKim December, 1859, V.C.; Nelson, p. 272.
53. Oates, p. 349; Villard, p. 550-551; Redpath, p. 390-391. Mary Brown also asked to visit the other prisoners arrested at Harper's Ferry. This was denied. Edwin Coppoc, imprisoned colleague of her husband, wrote to her later in December, "I was very sorry that your request to see the rest of the prisoners was not complied with." (quoted in Webb, p. 334).
54. Oates, p. 356-357; Nelson, p. 294: The Troy Times, December 5, 1859; Izant, p. 215. Mary, throughout her entire journey to and from Virginia, was not presented with any transportation costs. See Nelson, O. 285; Higginson to Annie and Sarah, November 4, 1859, H.L.H.S.
55. Reverend Joshua Young, "The Funeral of John Brown," New England Magazine, April 1, 1904, p. 229-245; Nelson, p. 297-299.
56. Salmon Brown, "My Father, John Brown," The Outlook, January 25, 1913; Izant, p. 217; Higginson in Overland Monthly, October, 1885, p. 364.
57. Mary A. Brown to Thaddeus Hyatt, January 14, 1860, V.C. The "John Brown Fund" was organized to raise money for the family. Mary received the bulk of the funds, with John Brown, Jr. and Watson's widow, Isabella, also getting greater shares. The records of the "John Brown Fund" (as of July 1860), as they appeared in the notes of Thaddeus Hyatt, are contained in Table I. A branch of the "John Brown Fund" was established in Haiti in 1861. It named an American Committee to distribute the money that it raised. This Committee (which included William Lloyd Garrison, Charles Sumner, and Wendell Phillips)

was supported by the Haitian Consul. Many Haitians responded generously. As of September 1862, the allocation of the funds raised was as follows:

- |   |                   |
|---|-------------------|
| Mrs. John Brown Sr.                           | \$1,674.47        |
| Mrs. Cook (widow of a Harper's Ferry Raider)  | 209.35            |
| Mrs. Leary (widow of a Harper's Ferry Raider) | 209.35            |
| John Brown Jr.                                | 209.35            |
| Owen Brown                                    | 209.34            |
| Osborn P. Anderson (a Harper's Ferry Raider)  | 209.34            |
|   | <u>\$2,721.19</u> |
- See: Mary A. Brown to George L. Stearns, August 13, 1861, in Velma West Sykes, Widow of the Gallows (unpublished manuscript); Chapter XII, p. 6, H.L.S.; Mary A. Brown to George L. Stearns, May 14, 1862, Sykes, p. 8; Mary A. Brown to George L. Stearns, June 23, 1861, Sykes, p. 6; Mary A. Brown to S.E. Sewall, February 13, 1861, S.C.; James Redpath in the Liberator, September 26, 1862.
58. Thaddeus Hyatt folder, V.C. Hyatt, of Brooklyn, was subpoenaed to testify at the U.S. Senate's Harper's Ferry hearings, but he refused, referring to it as an "inquisition." He was briefly imprisoned for contempt of Congress. See S.E. Sewall to Charles Sumner, December 20, 1859 and February 22, 1860, V.C.
  59. Mary A. Brown to S.E. Sewall, February 13, 1861, S.C. Samuel Sewall was the director of the Boston committee of the John Brown Fund.
  60. Edward Fitch Fullard to Mrs. Parsons, April 30, 1881, H.L.H.S.; Interview with Annie Brown Adams, October 2 and 3, 1908, V.C.
  61. quoted in Izant, P. 217
  62. Mary A. Brown to Edward Fitch Bullard, January 24, 1860, H.L.H.S.
  63. Mary A. Brown to McKim, March 6, 1860, H.L.H.S. Theodore Weld proposed to educate the daughters at the Englewood Seminary, according to a letter from Lydia Maria Child to Edward F. Bullard, December 19, 1859, H.L.H.S. Child felt "nothing ought to be decided about the children without Mrs. Brown's sanction." Bullard had set up a school at Ballstown, N.Y.



64. Mary A. Brown to Mr. and Mrs. George L. Stearns, October 21, 1860, Sykes, p. 2; Mary A. Brown to George L. Stearns, February 7 or 8, 1860 (with notes by Dr. Gee), H.L.H.S.; Josephine Brizard Appleton, "The Browns of Rohnerville 1870-1881," Humboldt Historical Society Newsletter, November-December 1965, p. 4, T.C.L.; Izant, p. 217; Mary A. Brown to Mrs. George L. Stearns, January 7, 1863, H.L.H.S.; Mary A. Brown to Mrs. George L. Stearns, August 4, 1863 (with notes by Dr. Gee), H.L.H.S.  
The children of Emerson, Henry James, Hawthorne and Horace Mann were classmates of Mary's daughters at Concord.
65. Izant, p. 218; Interview with Salmon Brown by K. Mayo, October 8, 1908, V.C.; Salmon Brown to James Holmes, January 10, 1900, V.C.
66. Horatio N. Rust to Mary A. Brown, January 27, 1863; Providence Journal, May 20, 1862, S.C.
67. "Celebration in North Elba," the Liberator, July 27, 1860.
68. Mary A. Brown, to J.M. McKim, December 9, 1860; Mary A. Brown to Mrs. George L. Stearns, March 3, 1863, S.C.
69. "Celebration in North Elba," the Liberator, July 27, 1860.
70. Mary A. Brown to Mrs. George L. Stearns, January 7, 1863, H.L.H.S.
71. Mary A. Brown to Mrs. George L. Stearns, March 3, 1863, S.C.
72. Mary A. Brown to Mrs. George L. Stearns, March 3, 1863, S.C.
73. Mary A. Brown to Mrs. George L. Stearns, August 4, 1863, S.C.
74. Mary A. Brown to Mrs. George L. Stearns, January 7, 1863, H.L.H.S.
75. quoted in Stavis, p. 29.
76. Mary Brown to Mrs. George L. Stearns, March 3, 1863, S.C.
77. Abbie Brown, "Recollections," in Sam Hanson, "Threats,

then Friends, for John Brown's People," Los Gato Daily Times, March 26, 1953, S.C.

78. Mary A. Brown to Mrs. George L. Stearns, August 4, 1863 S.C.
79. Abbie Brown, quoted in Izant, p. 218.
80. Mary A. Brown to J.M. McKim, September 2, 1863, H.L.H.S.
81. Izant, p. 218
82. Izant, p. 220; Recollections of Abbie Brown as told to Fred Lockley of Oregon Daily Journal in 1914, in Al Reck, "John Brown's Family Comes West," Oakland Tribune, January 8, 1961; New York Tribune, October 31, 1863.
83. Mary A. Brown to Owen Brown, January 31, 1864, H.L.H.S.
84. Mary A. Brown to Owen Brown, January 31, 1864, H.L.H.S.
85. Mary A. Brown to Owen Brown, January 31, 1864, H.L.H.S.; Recollections of Abbie Brown in Oakland Tribune, January 15, 1961.  
The main sources of information on the Brown's overland journey are the Recollections of Abbie Brown, an interview with Salmon Brown, and the correspondence of Annie Brown. The author was unable to find an account of the trip by Mary Brown, if indeed one exists.
86. Interview with Salmon Brown, by Fred Lockley in Oregon Daily Journal (Portland), August 19, 1914, S.C.; Sam Hanson, "Threats then Friends for John Brown's People," Los Gato Daily Times, March 26, 1953, V.C.; Recollections of Abbie Brown in Oakland Tribune, January 15, 1961.
87. Interview with Salmon Brown, by Fred Lockley in Oregon Daily Journal (Portland), August 19, 1914, S.C.
88. Recollections of Abbie Brown in Oakland Tribune, January 15, 1961.
89. Interview with Salmon Brown, by Fred Lockley in Oregon Daily Journal (Portland), August 19, 1914, S.C.
90. Recollections of Abbie Brown in Oakland Tribune, January 15, 1961; Interview with Salmon Brown, by Fred Lockley in Oregon Daily Journal (Portland), August 19, 1914, S.C.



91. Mrs. John Brown, Jr., to Mary A. Brown, September 16, 1855, in Villard, p. 98-99; Recollections of Abbie Brown in Oakland Tribune, January 22, 1961; Agnes Stuart Brown, "An Adventure on the Plains," n.d., V.C.; Izant, p. 220.
92. Interview with Salmon Brown, by Fred Lockley in Oregon Daily Journal, August 19, 1914, S.C.; Annie Brown to Mrs. Brown (John, Jr.) October 9, 1864, T.C.L.; Recollections of Abbie Brown in Oakland Tribune, January 22, 1961; Lydia Brown Crothers (historian of the Owen Brown Family Reunion Group), "Mary A. Day (Brown)," June 21, 1940, S.C.  
Annie wrote Mrs. John Brown, Jr., that there were "Tennessee rebels of the worst kind" in their wagon train. She also noted that there were Missourians in the train, that "the Plains were covered with Missourians this year;" Salmon also mentioned, in his interview, the presence of Missourians on the trip west.
93. Recollections of Abbie Brown in Oakland Tribune, January 22, 1961; Interview with Salmon Brown, by Fred Lockley in Oregon Daily Journal, August 19, 1914, S.C.; Annie Brown to Mrs. John Brown, Jr., October 9, 1864, T.C.L.
94. Recollections of Abbie Brown in Oakland Tribune, January 22, 1961; Interview with Salmon Brown, by Fred Lockley in Oregon Daily Journal, August 19, 1914, S.C.; Annie Brown to Mrs. John Brown, Jr., October 9, 1864 (with notes by Dr. Clarence S. Gee), T.C.L.; Ella Thompson Towne, "Letters Tell Story of John Brown's Widow's Trip Across Continent," Lake Placid News, November 24, 1939, S.C.
95. Annie Brown to Mrs. John Brown, Jr., October 9, 1864, T.C.L.; Interview with Salmon Brown, by Fred Lockley, in Oregon Daily Journal, August 19, 1914, S.C.
96. Overland Journey of the Brown Family 1863-1864, no date, no author, S.C. (These may have been Boyd S. Stutler's own notes); Annie Brown to Mrs. John Brown, Jr., October 9, 1864, T.C.L.; Recollections of Abbie Brown in Oakland Tribune, January 22, 1961.
97. Annie Brown to Mrs. John Brown, Jr., October 9, 1864, T.C.L.; Recollections of Abbie Brown in Oakland Tribune, January 22, 1961.

98. Harry Noyes Pratt, "A Woman Pioneer on Lassen's Peak," Overland Monthly and Out West Magazine, November, 1924; "Unmarked Frame House was Home of John Brown's Widow," Sacramento Bee, October 31, 1965.
99. "The California History of the Family of John Brown," no author, n.d., S.C.
100. The Red Bluff Independent quoted in Sacramento Bee, October 31, 1965.
101. Action No. 847, Tehama County Court, February 27 and 28, 1866; Tehama County Registrars of Deeds, Books, "D" and "G".  
This information on Mary Brown in Red Bluff was compiled in 1949 by Herbert M. Cheever. His compilation is in the Tehama County Library.
102. Red Bluff Weekly Independent, October 18, 1865, in Cheever, T.C.L.
103. Leo L. McCoy to Boyd S. Stutler, October 26, 1930, S.C. Izant, p. 221.
104. quoted in San Francisco Argonaut, January, 27, 1939.
105. Velma West Sykes, "Mrs. John Brown shared Martyr Role from Afar," Kansas City Times, October 25, 1963; Izant, p. 222.
106. Humboldt County Book of Deeds "I", p. 109, in Josephine Brizard Appleton, "The Browns of Rohnerville 1870-1881," Humboldt Historical Society Newsletter, No. 16, November-December, 1965, p. 3. T.C.L.; Humboldt County Assessments 1870-1871 in Appleton, p. 3; Humboldt County Book of Deeds "K", p. 433, in Appleton, p. 3; Humboldt County Assessments 1872-1873, in Appleton, p. 3.
107. Geraldine Ford Hanson to Josephine Brizard Appleton, October 1965, in Appleton, p. 3.
108. Information on the John Brown medal is in Hermann von Holst, John Brown (Boston, 1889), in the appendix - "Remarks on the John Brown medal," p. 189-190; also in the Fortuna (Cal.) Advance, August 16, 1905, "John Brown's Life," V.C. See also the very interesting article about this and other anti-slavery medals,



- "Medallions in The Martin Jacobowitz Collection," by Herbert Aptheker, Negro History Bulletin, May, 1970.
109. Izant, p. 222; Saratoga Historical Foundation, After Harper's Ferry (Saratoga, 1964), p. 29; San Francisco Chronicle, April 10, 1881.
  110. San Francisco Chronicle, April 19, 1881.
  111. "John Brown," Chicago Tribune, September 1, 1882.
  112. "Osawatomie Brown -- His Widow Warmly Welcomed," Chicago Daily News, September 1, 1882.
  113. "Mrs. John Brown," Chicago Daily Inter Ocean, September 1, 1882; "Osawatomie Brown -- His Widow Warmly Welcomed," Chicago Daily News, September 1, 1882; "John Brown," Chicago Tribune, September 1, 1882.
  114. Mary A. Brown to Salmon Brown and family, September 16-17, 1882, H.L.H.S.
  115. A Topeka, Kansas newspaper, November 16, 1882, S.C.; Sanborn, p. 499; Mary A. Brown to F.B. Sanborn, December 11, 1882, S.C.
  116. Mary A. Brown to Mrs. Lucy Clark, March 15, 1883, H.L.H.S.
  117. Saratoga Historical Foundation, After Harper's Ferry, p. 29; Sanborn, p. 449; Izant, p. 225.
  118. John Brown to Mary Al Brown, March 31, 1857, Ruchames. p. 111.
  119. Interview with Rebecca Spring, K. Mayo, September, 1908, V.C.
  120. Interview with Mary Thompson, by K. Mayo, August 22-September 1, 1908, V.C.
  121. Mary A. Brown to Mrs. George L. Stearns, August 4, 1863, S.C.
  122. Weekly Anglo-African, April 14, 1860, June 23, 1860 in Quarles, Black Abolitionists, p. 244.
  123. Mary A. Brown to John Brown, November 24, 1859, V.C.

#### BIBLIOGRAPHICAL NOTE

The manuscripts relating to John Brown are the primary research source on Mary Brown. A "Mary Brown" Collection does not exist. The collections I consulted contained folders or reels concerning Mary Brown and/or the the Brown family. The collection of the Reverend Dr. Clarence S. Gee, concentrates on Brown genealogy I received many of the materials in his collection through the mail. Thomas L. Vince is in charge of Dr. Gee's manuscripts at the Hudson Library and Historical Society. The Tehama County Library also sent me materials on request.

I examined in detail two of the manuscript collections, going first to Yale to consult the Stutler Collection, and then to Columbia to look at the Villard Collection. The latter, officially known as the "John Brown Collection," is part of Columbia's Special Collections division, Kenneth A. Lohf in charge.

Mary Brown is mentioned in a number of periodicals and journals. Most major newspapers in the East carried stories about her when she went to visit Brown in prison. Her interview with Theodore Tilton (N.Y. Times, November 18, 1859), held at that time, remains a most revealing expression of her views. The Liberator, the Weekly Anglo-African, and the National Anti-Slavery Standard all contain many references to Mary and her trip. The Stutler Collection contains a guide to John Brown in periodical literature which cites several articles about Mary's life both before and after Harper's Ferry. Oswald G. Villard's John Brown has a twenty page bibliography in which references to two articles on Mary (one from the Overland Monthly, and the other from the National Anti-Slavery Standard) are given.

In addition to the primary sources, I have used of course books about abolitionism and abolitionists, especially those on John Brown.



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